

(b) The basic principles governing Government purchases are laid down in the General Finance Rules (GFRs). No model code of purchase has been framed which is applicable/binding on all Ministries/Department.

(c) and (e) Various Central Government Ministries/Departments may have evolved their own purchase procedures keeping in view the aforesaid provisions of GFRs. Officers of DGS&D transferred to these Ministries/Departments consequent upon decentralisation of purchases would thus have to follow the purchase procedure adopted by the concerned Ministry/Department.

Pending Appeals before Income Tax Tribunals

4291. SHRI VIJAY KUMAR KHANDELWAL : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of appeals pending before the Income Tax Tribunals as on December 31, 1996;

(b) whether the Government are constituting more Tribunals and appointing Additional Members;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) other steps taken for expeditious disposal of pending cases ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) the number of appeals pending before the Income-tax Appellate Tribunal as on 31st December, 1996 was 2,99,334.

(b) and (c) Government has recently decided to establish 15 new benches of the Tribunal at the following places :

| Name of Station | No. of benches |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. Rajkot | 1 |
| 2. Agra | 1 |
| 3. Bangalore | 2 |
| 4. Mumbai | 5 |
| 5. Chandigarh | 1 |
| 6. New Delhi. | 2 |
| 7. Jodhpur | 1 |
| 8. Panaji | 1 |
| 9. Vishakhapatnam | 1 |

(d) Does not arise.

(e) More members have been conferred single member powers for hearing appeals. Members are sent on tours to stations where either the pendency is more or the regular Benches are not functioning. Grouping of appeals involving common issues for hearing, scrutiny of cases covered by earlier judgements for quick disposal and arranging camp courts at various places are some of the other steps taken for quick disposal of pending cases.

Export of Agarbathi

4292. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) the total value of agarbathi exported during 1996-97;

(b) whether the Government are aware that due to non-availability of bamboo splits for agarbathi industry it is difficult to achieve the estimated export from Karnataka; and

(c) if so, the steps taken by the Government to boost the export of agarbathi;

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) As per data available with DGCI&S, the total value of export of agarbathi during April-December, 1996 is Rs. 56.36 crores.

(b) and (c) the matter was represented before the Hon'ble Supreme Court and the Hon'ble Court in their order dated 4.3.97 have clarified that their directions dated 12.12.96 imposing a ban on felling of trees are not applicable to minor forest produce including bamboo. This is likely to improve the availability of bamboo for agarbathi industry.

Losses in Public Sector and Rural Banks

4293. SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI :
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state the number of rural and semi-urban branches of the public sector banks that are running into losses and how does that compare with the branches of private sector banks running into these very rural and semi-urban areas, if any?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : The number of rural and semi-urban branches of the public sector banks and private sector banks running into losses during the last two years i.e., 1994-95 and 1995-96, as reported by Reserve Bank of India, is given below :